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orderly sequence. Instead of attempting to force the material into a strictly chronological mold on the one hand, or, on the other, of trying to organize it on a few simple lines, Mr. Warner has taken a middle course, and has chosen what appears to him the chief landmark of each age, and grouped round it the events which led up to it, and the consequences which came from it. Thus we get a series of remarkable chapters describing the chief streams of policy and tendency, and the action of the causes that have made up the economic history of England. In some of these chapters, as, *e. g.*, The Black Death, Elizabeth's Legislation, or The Agrarian Revolution, the treatment is masterly and the most suggestive we know of. The effect of the whole work is greatly enhanced by an attractively lucid style. A cordial reception may safely be predicted for this volume by all teachers of economic history.

A. C. M.

The Wheat Problem, Revised, with an answer to various Critics. By SIR WILLIAM CROOKES, F. R. S. With chapters on the future wheat supply of the United States by C. WOOD DAVIS and JOHN HYDE. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900. 12mo. pp. xiii + 272.

A SECONDARY purpose of Sir William Crookes's essay on "The World's Supply of Wheat" apparently is to call attention to his experiments in the fixation of nitrogen. These experiments may well have a grave significance for the future food supply, or at any rate the question of the artificial fixation of nitrogen may come to be a vital question, although there are probably few economists who see the problem of artificial fixation as a sphynx's riddle impending in the immediate future.

The author's argument converges to the conclusion that a general scarcity of food is, at the most, no more than a generation ahead. In this he is ably seconded by Mr. Davis's hearty co-operation and has also the somewhat equivocal support of Mr. Hyde's discussion of the wheat problem. Of Mr. Davis it is of course expected that he should unreservedly throw what weight his word has on the side of Sir William's contention. But Mr. Hyde, as becomes a cautious statistician, is non-committal in any matter of forecast, except where he is on the safe ground of available acreage. Mr. Hyde speaks directly to the point which he has set before him, *viz.*, the wheat supply; and he does not commit

himself to the implication that "the wheat supply" is or comes near being synonymous with "the food supply." He deals with the question as a statistical problem of acreage, and has very little to say on the more important question of yield; for future changes of yield, so far as concerns this country, cannot be discussed with any definite outcome on the basis of present statistics. He is, however, content to leave the question of probable future yields with a simple indication of what has been the course of average yields for twenty years back, neglecting to point out that the situation of the grain market during this period has been such as to discourage all efforts to increase the yields of any of the common grains, and so leaving the misleading suggestion that the course of future yields is to be directly inferred from the yields in the immediate past. But while Mr. Hyde's most telling contribution to the argument for a scarcity is this, probably unintended, misleading implication, Sir William faces the question of yields and disposes of it in one of the most extraordinary passages that has yet been met with in all the curious literature extant on the wheat question. In a reply to criticisms offered by Sir John Lawes and Sir Henry Gilbert he argues (pp. 104-107) that the low yields of America, as compared with those of England, are due to conditions of climate and soil, not to the American farmer's less close economy in the use of land. "American methods are quite as well adapted to the soils and climate as are those of England to the soils and climate of Great Britain." This passage the context compels us to take seriously. The consummate ignorance of the aims and methods of American farming reflected in this statement is assuredly surprising enough in a scientist who has so evidently taken pains to inform himself on other features of the subject. And it is at the same time unfortunate in that it may raise a presumption that other, more substantial portions of the argument proceed on equally fanciful and headlong generalizations. In the face of his incredible dealings with these economic data, it needs all the prestige of Sir William's great name to sustain our faith in what he has to say when he is speaking within the lines of his own science.

Correlated with this assumption, that the yield per acre is necessarily stable, is an equally surprising assumption to the effect that the unit consumption of wheat must go on increasing and so hasten the approach of scarcity. Abundance during the past fifteen years has resulted in an increase of unit consumption, and this increase, it is argued, will go on in the face of a slackening supply so as to cause a

scarcity in the future. That is to say, because we have had abundance and consequent low prices of wheat, resulting in a high unit consumption and a low yield, therefore we must expect that in the future we shall have a high unit consumption and a low yield, resulting in scarcity and high prices. Certain passages in the volume might even be construed to say that we shall presently suffer privation because of the excessive prosperity and efficiency of our industry in the future.

So far as the essay is an argument for impending scarcity it proceeds on the assumption that "other circumstances remain the same," particularly the adverse circumstances. But there appears to be no reason for believing that other things will remain the same in the immediate future, any more consistently than they have done in the past. It may therefore fairly be doubted whether Sir William's draft on the future's bank of misery will be honored, since it is drawn with this proviso.

T. V.

Die Entstehung des sozialen Problems. Von ARNOLD FISCHER.

Rostock i. M.: C. J. E. Volckmann, 1896-1898. 8vo. pp. xvi + 781.

THE social problem with which the author is occupied is of course the problem which modern socialism offers to solve. A solution is sought in a "science of civilization," differing from earlier attempts at such a science, particularly in the degree of profundity and exhaustiveness with which the causes of cultural growth and the controlling principles of development are examined and formulated. If once an adequate theory of culture has been established, the author feels, the rest follows as a matter of course, though not necessarily by an easy and unlaborious inference, from the main drift of this theory. The social problem which confronts the present generation is a necessary phenomenon of the present phase of culture; it is a fruit which in the natural course ripens at the present stage of cultural maturity, and at no other stage. If we can find wherein consists the essential character of the growth in cultural maturity, we shall, therefore, have a key to the successive emergence of the problems that arise in the life history of society as well as to their significance for the growth of civilization and to their practical solution.

The degree of maturity attained by human culture at any given phase is a question of the degree of exhaustion of the vitality of the